A (14)

SERMON

Preached at the

ASSIZES

HELD AT

CHELMSFORD

IN THE

County of Essex.

September 2d. 1691.

Before the Honourable
Sir *WILLIAM DOLBEN*, Knight,
one of the JUSTICES of the Court
of KINGS BENCH.

By *STEPHEN THORNTON*,
Rector of *Ludsdown* in *Kent*.

LONDON:
Printed for *Samuel Smith*, at the *Prince's Arms* in
St. *Paul's* Church-yard. 1691.

Library of Congress

To the Honourable

Coll. John Cook,

High Sheriff for the

County of Eſſex.

A-19 Pam
T514A

SIR,

I Could have eaſily ſate down contented with the good Reception this Performance found upon the place; nor am I ignorant how impolitick it is to puſh on too far upon the Flatteries of an happy beginning; but as your Commands alone drew me from my private Station, ſo they have prevaled with me to be yet more Publick. If any thing prove worthy of blame in this Attempt, you muſt be pleaſed to be in a great meaſure anſwerable for it, with thoſe other Gentlemen who would not be denied, and indeed whoſe Kindneſſes have merited this and a greater Obedience.

I confeſs it is ſomething uneaſie to think of being expoſed to the Cenſures of Men, which are not commonly ſo fair as they ſhould be. But let them be what they will, I ought to gratifie you at ſome hazard; and for once will try the Ingenuity of the World, in hope that what is here ſaid may benefit ſome part of it.

Not being converſant in Modern Writings, perhaps I have ſaid nothing here but what ſome others have ſaid better before me. If any know where, they have my leave to repair thither, and my Prayers for a Bleſſing upon their Applications. I would not willingly be acceſſary to any man's loſs of time and diſappointment. But I hope they will allow me a Province among thoſe of leſſer Reading and Attainments. And I aſſure you, Sir, there are thoſe in the World to whom the things here ſpoken are new, and ſome of them ſuch as pretend to converſe and talk of Books, and from whom one might expect other things. Writing would be at a ſtand, were every one bound to produce ſomething perfectly new, the Actions of the World being little elſe but a ſeries of Repetitions.

I never had the Vanity to think of pleasing all Men; on the contrary, I certainly reckon upon it that I shall displease some. Perhaps too the fault will be on their side, which I pray God to forgive them. If any shall desire to triumph in my Infirmities, I shall prevent them in the honour of the Discovery, being alway ready to make a large confession of them. But if an honest Intention may make amends, let them know that I am a great lover of Mankind, and when I please them least, I desire to do them good. God grant this Performance may attain that end, and I have mine.

That those who are skilled in Criticks may not think themselves neglected, I will excuse one thing to them. Perhaps some things may seem to be brought into this Discourse impertinently. It may be necessary therefore to tell them, That my Text was not only those few words of the Prophet prefixt to the Sermon, but the temper of the World as it fell under my Observation. And if they think I ought not to have accommodated my thoughts to it, it may be sufficient to tell them, that I am of another mind, and if in an Error, not past all hopes of being made sensible of it.

Sir, *I beg your Pardon if I have done you any dishonour in this Dedication, and shall take this Occasion publickly to acknowledge my Obligation to your self and Relations, to whom I owe the Opportunities which I have of serving the Church of God. That you may continue immoveable in the love which I know you have to our established Church, and your largeness of Soul towards all good Christians; That you may still become your Honourable Station, and find returns of all in this and another World, is the hearty Prayer of,*

SIR,

Your Most Humble and Most
Obliged Servant,

STEPHEN THORNTON.

Amos V. xv.

Hate the evil, and love the good, and eſtabliſh Judgment in the gate: it may be that the Lord God of Hoſts will be gracious unto the Remnant of Joſeph.

BY the Complaints that make ſo conſiderable a part of this Prophecy we underſtand, That the Kingdom of the Ten Tribes was at this time fallen into great Corruptions of *Religion* and *Civil Juſtice*. For as if it had been but a light thing to walk in the ways of *Jeroboam* the Son of *Nebat*, who had taught them to ſin, they had multiplied their Impieties, and made the Abominations of *Gilgal* and *Beerſheba* as Famous as thoſe of *Dan* and *Bethel*, *ver.* 5. The bitterneſs of their Judgment, their Exactions upon the Poor, the Affliction of the Righteous, and taking Bribes, make up the reſt of their Character in this Chapter, to ſuch a ſuſpenſion of Juſtice, that it was become a prudent thing to keep ſilence, *ver.* 13. rather than to be waſted with delays, to diſſemble an In-

jury, rather than ſuffer a greater in form of Law.

All then ſeem to be ſilent but their ſins, and the Prophet, who diſcharges his Office at that rate, that *the Land was not able to bear his words*, *Chap.* 7. 10. Indeed the Land was not in caſe to bear much ſearching, and the poor Man found by his Reception, that he had not much changed his Employment, when *the Lord took him from among the Herdſmen to make him a Prophet*, *ver.* 14. but had now as ſenſeleſs Creatures to deal with as thoſe he had fed in the Fields of *Tekoa*. Yet no fear of diſturbing the Land, which deſired to be left in a quiet Apoſtacy, nor any conſtruction of diſreſpect to the *King's Court and Chappel*, *ver.* 13. can make him ſuppreſs a Divine Meſſage, but he fills them with Reproofs, Lamentations, and Warnings of approaching Judgment, and ſometimes clears up into a milder Exhortation with Propoſitions of Mercy; of which latter ſort is the Text now under conſideration, *Hate the evil, and love the good*, &c.

Theſe words, *Hate the evil, and love the good*, are in themſelves of a large ſignification, but compared with the *6th.* and *14th.* Verſes, and the occaſion of the Diſcourſe, they ſeem capable of this limited ſenſe, *viz. Be Religious.* To *eſtabliſh Judgment in the Gate*, is to *adminiſter*

miſter Publick Juſtice, which in thoſe Times and Countries was done at the Gates of Cities. By *Joſeph* he underſtands the *Ten Tribes*, which it ſeems the *Syrian* Wars and other Calamities had now reduced to a Remnant. And the Particle אולי *it may be*, imports no diſtruſt of God's Mercy (for never any one ſo perſwades Repentance), but is an artificial propounding of a Difficulty, to heighten and warm their Applications.

I ſhall enlarge the ſenſe of the Prophet into this general Propoſition; *That beſide the common Obligations to Religion and Juſtice, there is that of the greateſt Intereſt we have in the World, viz. The Eſtabliſhment of a Nation in the favour of God, and ſecuring the Publick Happineſs.*

I begin with *Religion*, and ſhall firſt conſider the common Obligations to it; then that of National Intereſt; and laſtly, a Modern Prejudice againſt it.

Firſt, Common Obligations to *Religion* are,

1. It's Authority. This is that ſhort way of Satisfaction ſo much in eſteem with ſome of the Philoſophers, who ſaved themſelves the labour of Reaſoning by the Authority of their Maſters. And what is this ſetting up Men for Gods, but worſhipping Error and Impertinence?

But if the Authority be truly Divine, it ſelf is the higheſt Reaſon. Now that the Religion which we profeſs has ſuch an Authority, was demonſtrated by thoſe Perſons who were entruſted with the propagation of it in the World, not by the pretence of ſecret Conferences with *Nymphs*, or reſort to far diſtant *Oracles* (as in the known Stories of *Numa* and *Lycurgus*), but by the active Preſence of a Divine Power with them in their Miniſtry, and by a Conduct that might clear their Sincerity to Mankind. It would be too much to ſend thoſe that deny this ſo many Ages backward (they are commonly too weak and lazy to travel ſo far after an Argument); let them then but look about them at the Progreſs that this Religion has made in the World, and give a tolerable account how all this could come to paſs without ſuch a Divine Power. None ſpeak more of the dulneſs and unpoliteneſs of the Apoſtles than they. With what a ſpiteful ſort of ſatisfaction are the Characters of the ſame Vertue in *Seneca* admired, in St. *Paul* blaſphemed? How have ſome Heathen Writers in their judgment for fineneſs of Wit and Expreſſion out-done the Teachers of Chriſtianity? Caſt into this Account all the Contempts the *Corinthians* treated their Apoſtle with (thô the moſt learned of them all,) *his preſence weak*, (per-

(perhaps *homo tricubitalis*) *his ſpeech contemptible*, without any graces of Oratory, 2 *Cor.* 10.10. Allow all their little Witticiſms upon the Apoſtles mean Accompliſhments and way of Life. And what does all this come to, but that it proves them aſſiſted with a Divine Power? 'Tis true, *Tully* and *Seneca*, *&c.* ſpoke fine things concerning Vertue and Felicity, but who ever heard of their Converſions in the World? A *Fiſherman*, under the prejudice of Drunkenneſs, with a plain inartificial ſpeech, brings in 3000 Souls, *Acts* 2. A *Tent-maker* ventures to Preach at *Athens*, the Seat of Learning; and the Mechanick finds Proſelytes among the Philoſophers, *Acts* 17. Look into the preſent ſtate of the World, and where-ever there is Learning and Civility, the Writings of theſe Men are kept, are reverenced, are conſulted as Oracles. Never was Philoſophy, Wit, all Science ſo far advanced; and yet the wiſeſt and moſt accompliſh'd of the Age grow old in ſtudying theſe Apoſtles, nor has all *Tully* ſo much Comment as one Paragraph of the Tent-maker. It will be hard to perſwade any conſidering Man, that all this could proceed from Men of their Figure without the help of a Divine Power. St. *Paul* acknowledges that *this treaſure was put into earthen veſſels*, and makes advantage of it in favour of the Goſpel, *that the excellency of the power might be of God, and not of men*,

men, 2 Cor. 4. 7. We muſt then confeſs a Miracle on one hand; for either thoſe attributed to the Apoſtles are true, or elſe the ſucceſs of Chriſtianity will it ſelf be the greateſt Miracle that ever was in the World. And take which ſide you will, it proves the Divine Authority of our Religion.

2. The Nature of the things it propounds, which are of the greateſt Conſequence to us imaginable. The higheſt Enquiry of our Life is after Bleſſedneſs, and this *Chriſtian Philoſophy* kindly offers us her Hand in the Search. *Cicero* (whom I mention for a Pattern) has a whole Treatiſe of Beatitude, wherein beſide ſome Learning in ſorting the Opinions of the Ancients, we find little of any thing poſitively aſſerted, but *That our ſupream Good is to live according to perfect Nature*, and that all *Wiſe Men are happy, but in ſeveral degrees.* This goes a good way toward a Confeſſion that Beatitude is to be expected in ſome other ſtate. But indeed herein was the weakneſs of that Philoſophy, that it ſtill left Men upon the Confines of Felicity.

De Finib. l. 5. — id eſſt in bonis ultimum ſecundùm naturam vivere. — Ex hominis naturâ undique perfectâ, &c. — Omnes ſapientes eſſe beatos, ſed tamen fieri poſſe ut ſit alius alio beatior.

But a moderate Proficient in revealed Religion knows more than a whole Age of Philoſophers. From what cauſe proceed the Miſeries that vex and embitter Humane Life, what allays may be given to them here, what Corrections of Nature,

what

what approaches to be made to the Divine and Original Life; That our Souls are immortal, and ſhall ſubſiſt in another ſtate, wherein they ſhall better know what belongs to Felicity; What Manifeſtations the Supream Being has made of himſelf and his Love to the World, how to underſtand and ſubmit to his Providences, and make uſe of all the parts of Life; what hope we have of Mercy, and what aſſiſtance of a Divine Grace; by what Duties we may pleaſe and enjoy our Creator; theſe are Propoſitions of our Religion. And how worthy are theſe to employ our moſt ſerious Conſiderations? It is only in ſuch that our Minds are match'd with an Object. What was Heavenly in them expires while they mingle too freely with the Duſt. Let our thoughts then ariſe and ſoar to the utmoſt reaches of our Nature, and let us diſtinguiſh our ſelves from the Brutes, leaving them their own Enjoyments. Nothing but Religion can ſufficiently vindicate us from being part of the Herd.

3. Its Reaſonableneſs. This joyned to its Authority is wonderfully obliging, without which that might ſeem Tyranny over the Soul; but this brings the engagement of Love. Now Religion is Rational as to Points of *Faith*. *That God is*, is as certain as that there is a World, as that there is a Cauſe which it ſelf is not alſo the Effect of ſomething elſe.

elſe. He that knows his own frame, finds a great many ſteps of a Divine Wiſdom that has been there. Reaſon it ſelf is one of the greateſt Wonders, and its own Argument of a God. The great thoughts of a Soul ſhew a great Original, and it can conceive no leſs of its Powers, but that there is a Being who has them in perfection. It ſelf is a little Deity governing its own World, which muſt needs facilitate the belief of ſomething parallel in the Univerſe.

And as it is evident from Reaſon *that God is*, ſo that *He is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, Heb 11. 6. and conſequently that there is a future ſtate. And thô we were not agreed upon Revelation as to the neceſſity of a *Redeemer*, it would be no irrational Belief. We can't but confeſs the Debt of a perfect Obedience to our Creator, and yet all find a ſtrange Iniquity in their Natures (which God placed not there, and therefore is not bound to make allowances for) which ſtains the beſt Life and the cleareſt Duties. The Sacrifices of all Nations have been a kind of Confeſſion that this needed Blood. And indeed if on one hand we conſider Sin in all its horrors, and on the other the Purity and Juſtice of God, we may as ſoon bring Antipathies together as God and Man without a Mediator. The Afflictions of this Life, were they evenly diſtributed, would be far from clearing

clearing our Accounts with Divine Juſtice; but indeed they are not ſo, therefore cannot be relied upon as Satisfactions. And whatever ſome may think of the vertues of a true Repentance, come to matter of Fact, and there is none ſo true, but, if it ſtand alone, it ſelf is a thing to be repented of, needs a Sacrifice, and leads to a Redeemer.

The other parts of *Faith*, which are a train of Propoſitions from theſe two, *There is one God*, and *One Mediator between God and Man*, 1 *Tim.* 2, 5. will be Rational becauſe they are ſo. And I know not why we ſhould be afraid of that way of ſpeaking, *That the Myſteries of this Religion are rational too*, ſince this cannot be denied of things *above Reaſon*, ſo they are not *contrary* to it, which whoever affirms concerning the *Revealed Acts* of an infinite, incomprehenſible Nature, is himſelf moſt irrational. And perhaps ſome of theſe things which are above Reaſon in its preſent ſtate, may not be ſo much Secrets to us in another, when *we ſhall know as we are known*, 1 *Cor.* 13, 12. nor perhaps are ſo now to ſome higher Reaſons in the World.

The *Active part of our Religion* is reduced by our Saviour to the exerciſes of *Love to God and our Neighbour*, which are ſo confeſſedly Rational, that all Moraliſts of good Credit have, tho' in different terms, uſed them as Principles. Therefore to be ſhort with them, if that be Rational which

makes us like God, and admits us into his Favour, which employs and advances our diviner part, and renders us profitable in the World; then nothing can be more Rational than Religion. Thus have I considered some of the common Obligations to Religion.

Secondly, I shall urge the *Obligation* of *National Interest.*

I call this our greatest Interest, and indeed it is little to none but those whose Souls are such. Other Creatures have a Principle that directs them to preserve their own Being, but Man is ζῶον πολιτικὸν, capable of a Publick Care. Nay, we might consider the Community so too, a Great Animal, whereof we are all parts, living by one common Soul. And as it is unnatural that *one of the Members should rejoyce whilst the rest suffer*, 2 *Cor.* 12. 26; so in this great Body none should have a Felicity by himself. 'Tis monstrous that the Case of the whole should not be the Case of particulars. By this our private Respects are to be tried. The love of Parents in comparison with that of our Country scarce deserves the name of Vertue; nor our fondness of Princes, but as they are a Common Good; otherwise it is but a private Respect, to say no worse of it. I believe it is our Duty to love our Country above any one part of it. It is hard to think of this and not be a little

warm

warm againſt an unnatural Generation amongſt us that would ſell us. We have many that ſpeak half *Aſhdod*, enough to make it queſtioned whether they had *Engliſh* Fathers. But I will leave them to other hands to be treated ſuitably to their Merits, and *ſhew how Religion ſerves this Intereſt*:

1. By a *Natural Influence*, inaſmuch as it *makes good Citizens*. Fear might indeed bring Men into Society, but there muſt be ſome other Principle to keep them together. That makes them a great heap of People, but Love cements and unites them. Without this, Society is but a more ſly ſtate of War, and Compacts are but Snares to them that hold them Sacred. Now whatever tends to Settlement, as Juſtice, Sobriety, Contentment, love of Peace and Common Good, is the Dictate of Religion, whoſe Kingdom is in the Minds and Affections of Men, and makes them not only a Society, but Sociable. A People is ſecure under Governours that fear God of good Laws, and thoſe in good hands; that they ſhall enjoy their Labours, and find the Protection they pay for. They would know their meaning in their Solemn Profeſſions, and not fear their having Intereſts diſtinct from their People. On the other hand, a Prince does not find that Service from his own Laws as from Religion. Obedience from an inward Principle needs not the quickning of Legal Penalties, but

moves by an everlasting Spring, and scorns to stay for Motives that were invented for Slaves and Cattel. Men would more freely pay for their share in the Publick Safety, and redeem it out of some Chargeable Vanity. Religion would cut off Murders, Invasions of Right, and all Disorders at the Root, and leave no work for the Law; and this, by taking away Envy, unlawful Desires, and softning the Genius of Men: yet makes them not so soft as to shrink from their Stations in a Just War, when their Country requires their Service. That's the effect of Vice and Luxury. These will make Men great Souldiers in Peace, to distinguish themselves now and then in a fit of drunken Valour, but dare not see an Enemy sober; and whilst others spend their Blood and Rest for their Country, these lye inglorious at home, dissolved and dispirited by a corrupt Life. It's for want of a due sense of Religion among Men, that a Government, notwithstanding the Caution of Oaths and Tests, scarce knows her own.

I know that accidentally the true Religion *brought a sword upon earth*, *Mat.* 10.34; Pretences to it have hurried Men into Immoralities; and some false Religions have very Casuistically determined them Lawful. But let this be laid to the Vices, and Passions, and Prepossessions of Men, which where Religion could not reform, it irritated.

Some

Some from the hot advices of these fill the World with Desolation, and call it Religion; and the undistinguishing *Fool, that says in his heart, there is no God*, cants *Lucretius*, *Tantum Religio potuit*, &c. Certainly men would think it hard to be dealt with in their own Reputations as they deal with that *Wisdom which is from above, pure, peaceable*, *James* 3. 17. no Parent of Strife or Ruin: its Mistakes and Pretences indeed may be so, but it self is naturally fitted to the Happiness of Humane Society.

2. As it *procures God to be gracious to a Nation.* Ambition can propound nothing higher than to command the Creation, and this follows from the Friendship of Omnipotence. In Calamities the Libertine would be glad of a God too, to mend the state of the World. Now whether we can apply the promises of the Old Testament or no, it's certain that the encouragement of present things is no such strange sound under the Gospel, *Godliness has the promise of the life that now is*, as well as of *that which is to come*, 1 *Tim.* 4. 8. and if ever it be fulfilled *in specie*, it will be to Politick Bodies, to Nations. Were there no more in it but the removing those things that provoke God against us, it would deserve all the good we can say of it. When a People have had the Gospel so long, that they are ashamed of it, and *God so*

nigh unto them in all things, that they are weary of him; ſuch merciful viciſſitudes of Providence, and all preſently forgotten like ſome antediluvian Hiſtory; when Blaſphemy has corrupted the Language of a Nation, and bold Exceſſes and Fornication its Morals, the caſe of ſuch a People is not to be conſidered at a common rate. Had they been placed in ſome dark part of the World, they might with more ſafety have worſhipt the *Pagods*, and fallen down to the *Riſing Sun*.

Now in ſuch publick Danger how uſeful would true Religion be in the hearts and lives of Men? One Property is, that it is full of Prayers, gets into the Gap, and will not ſuffer Deſtruction to break in. With all thoſe Cries of *Sodom*, *Gen.* 18. had there been but *Ten Righteous Men* to have mingled their Prayers, they had out-done them. Were then a *Nation* Religious, what a Security would this amount to? What an Harmony of publick Deſires, what ſtrong Cries? They do much now with all the noiſe of Blaſphemy; but were this the breathing of all our Souls, what a ſweet-ſmelling ſavour would it be? We ſhould with leſs Expence tread down our Enemies: and if it be a greater Bleſſing to have none, we ſhould have that too; for *when a man's ways pleaſe the Lord, he maketh even his Enemies to be at peace with him*, *Prov.* 16. 7.

The

The result of all is, That we cherish our Religion as our *Palladium*. What *Balak* could not do by *Balaam*'s Inchantments he compassed by his Counsels, *To lay a stumbling-block before the Children of* Israel, *to eat things offered to Idols, and commit Fornication*, *Rev.* 2. 14. We have much the same Obligation to the debauched part of the Nation; nay, tho they talk high for the Government and Church, and give the Enemies of them to the Devil, they do so too by their own Souls and Blood every day. This helps not us, *Hoc Ithacus velit*. Let them reform their Lives, and we shall be glad of their Prayers, otherwise let them not name us. It looks like a desperate Cause where they have any Interest. Let them take our Religion altogether, or go seek one to which their Lives will be no scandal, but is as bad as themselves. They deprive us of *our Rock, our Strength, our Salvation*, and instead of him they will defend us. Let them not mistake us, (what *Achish* says in the case of *David*) *Have we any need of Madmen?*

Sirs, it is our hard Fate, that we have our Nation to deliver out of the hands of these Men as well as our most professed Enemies. If it be possible, let us pray down their Blasphemies. Yet Prayers themselves will be but noise, except they be the Offerings of pure Minds, and our Lives too

too be sanctified to God. Thus we shall serve our Country better than in a Century of Campagnes.

But beside a Personal Reformation, some have Families to bring in to the Common Service, some other Charges. And to Address with all Respect to you, *The Honourable and Worshipful the Magistrates*, you are *Ministers of God too*. We are not forgetful how greatly you merited of us in times when it was not very safe to dare to be *Englishmen*. By you we do not look back with sorrow upon the Ruins of a Nation, and cry, *Ruinous Trees*. Only pardon me if I remember you that your worthy Conduct has raised our expectations to see the Laws against common wickedness better executed, and that you have not saved them in vain. Our Gracious Princes have not such Designs as stand in need of the wickedness of their People. Stand up then for the Honour of God, who has imparted to you his Authority, and his Name, *Psal.* 82. 6. Let not Vice bear it self out with State and Quality, nor *the floods of ungodly men make you afraid*. We find that the naked Proposition of Vertue will not do, and must beg your Hand for languishing Religion. Mark Vice with the Infamy the Laws have assigned it, restrain Atheism from Proselyting in this Light, at least frown all Profaneness out of genteel Society; let it

be ſeen that you really *hate the evil, and love the good*, and we ſhall not take it ill if you call upon us too in our turns, that we may all riſe up with united Zeal for the Honour of our God, for our Altars, for all our deareſt Intereſts, and for our afflicted Brethren, the *Remnant of Joſeph*.

Thirdly, I ſhall conſider a Modern Prejudice againſt Religion. That *good* is to be *loved*, and *evil hated*, ſcarce any will deny; but the perplexity is, that what ſome Teachers of Religion call good, others call evil: ſo that ſome People think it reaſonable to be of none at all till they are agreed; which is ſo far from being to be expected, that the ſame Teachers are not alway at agreement with themſelves, but what they call good at one time, they call evil another. 'Tis a ſcandal to ſome that a ſort of Doctrines taught ſo earneſtly a few years ago, are ſcarce now to be heard of, except with ſome temperaments and ſoftnings; 'tis a ſcandal to others that they were ever heard of. The iniquity of one Humour is unaccountable: The ſame People are angry with us for our ſcruples about the preſent Settlement and our compliances too; our Repentance is made our Crime; and if the Teachers of Religion know their buſineſs no better, it is no matter what any of them ſay: nothing is certain of it,

but that it is all Cheat (*Prieſtcraft* is the Modiſh word), and in vain Men heat themſelves ſo about Fundamentals, for the time will come when they will take their turns too to be out of ſeaſon.

This is the true ſtate of the Objection, which I could not decline, however it may ſeem to come in here. And indeed if all did not go to the account of Religion, we could be ſilent, thô we want not what to ſay for ſelves. We could in part deny the Fact. Men that never took the pains to underſtand our Doctrines, may bring us in for more than we taught; and becauſe we don't agree with their Fancies, think we do not agree with our ſelves. If we now leave the Nature of the Government to more proper Judges, in the main we teach the ſame Obedience to it. If this be done with leſs heat, it is becauſe the occaſion is ceaſed, and the Debaucheries of the Age (eſpecially the Objectors) find us ſufficient work. But my Deſign is not to vindicate our ſelves, but Religion; which I ſhall do upon a Suppoſition that what is contained in the Objection is true.

1. In general; Differences in Religion rightly conſidered, are a Confirmation to it: It has foretold them, *There muſt be Hereſies*, 1 Cor. 11. 19.

By

By this Rule *Atticus* of *Constantinople* counted the *Novatians* good Witnesses of the Common Faith (*a*). And thô the *Marcionites* seemed to be a scandal to Martyrdom, yet God accepted the Confessions of some of them (*b*); not because they gave a Testimony to *Marcionism*, but *Christianity*. 'Tis generally agreed among the Contending Parties, that there is one God, that there was such a Person as Jesus Christ, that the Histories of the New Testament are for the main true, that there will be a Resurrection, &c. To turn the Argument upon them, if we may in any case prejudge, it is here in favour of Religion. These must needs be Truths of great Evidence, which are preserved among the heats of so many different Disputes. Had we agreed in all little Particulars, they would have had the better colour to make a Plot of it. But the Differences that have been amongst us from the beginning of Christianity, do that Service as to refute any such Pretence. How would a Confederacy have hung together of Men of such contrary Sentiments, *Paul* against *Peter*, *Barnabas* against *Paul*, yet all ready to offer themselves for their common Saviour? In the mean time how inconsistent are these People with themselves?

(*a*) Soc. *l.* 7. *c.* 25.

(*b*) Eusch. *de Martyr. Palæst. c.* 10.

Sometimes we are all united in one Deſign to cheat the World: Sometimes we are ſo ſcandalouſly contentious, that the ſafeſt way is to believe none of us. So like are the Arguments of Sin to it ſelf, *i. e.* full of Contradictions.

2. Suppoſing that the Teachers of Religion had in ſome things altered their minds, this could only be an Argument againſt their Infallibility, which without all this trouble will be confeſt. We pretend to no other ways of coming at Knowledge than other Men, the uſe of means, which God bleſſes in ſeveral meaſures. Every Soul has its *private reliſhes*, a Natural kindneſs toward ſome Reaſons and Opinions more than others, which perhaps it brought from ſome former ſtate; and in this we are like the reſt of the World, till by good thinking we have recovered our ſelves. We have not an univerſal *Genius*, and it's no wonder if when we are out of our Province we run into ſome ſmall Errors. Beſide ſome things (eſpecially relating to Government) may promiſe fair in the Speculation, but deceive in Practice, and are of ſuch a Nature, that they admit of no Proof but Experience. And as a Man is not preſently a Knave for not fore-ſeeing all Conſequences; ſo when tryal has ſhewed him the weakneſs of his Reaſons, it is ſo far from Crime, that I think he ought to forſake them.

But

But if the Teachers of Religion be so fallible, what Security have those that are taught that they shall not be deceived? I Answer, *You have* Moses *and the Prophets, hear them.* You have the Gospel. We deny you no means that we have. You are not to expect new Oracles from us, and if in explaining the Old we corrupt them, you have them by you, *Bring us to the Law and to the Testimony*; we decline not the Judgment of the Apostles of Christ. Except you contribute by your own laziness, you are secure from Capital Errors; and those which you cannot avoid by using all possible care and helps (of which we are but one part) shall never be Capital to you.

But if Men can do all this themselves, what need is there of Teachers? I Answer, This proceeds upon a wrong Notion of Teaching, which is not only bearing Men down with Authority, but leading them by Reason. 'Tis true, every Man must see for himself, but he that sets a matter in a clear light to him, does him a service. *Call no man Master*, take Religion upon no man's Credit, but we may from his Arguments. A very understanding Man has not always a good Reason at hand, yet can see and immediately embrace one when propounded. And this is the true use of Teaching in Religion, to help, not to supersede your Enquiries.

3. If

3. If we must needs go by prejudices, there are enough against those that use these Inferences. Mind them, and you will certainly find, that either they are a *lazy People* that would fain throw all the trouble of their Salvation upon their Teachers; or a sort of *empty peevish Disputers*, that for want of Argument begin to be angry, and throw dirt; or most commonly a *vitious loose Generation*, that would fain get rid of the restraints of Religion, and therefore catch at any presumptions against it. If it were not thus, they would apply the same Rule to other things as well as Religion. There are as many differences in Law; almost every Cause supposes one; is there therefore no true sense of it? Will they use no Physician that was ever in an Error, or confesses himself Mortal? I know of some Hereticks in Mathematicks, but it would be pity they should ruin the Credit of Demonstration. Nor will they say this, tho it be just the same Inference; which is a certain sign they consult their Lusts, and not their Reason in their Arguments against Religion.

However since Arguments work as they delight, not as they conclude, it would be well if we took them out of their hands. All our Differences were managed with more Candor and ingenuous allow-

allowance for the various inclinations of Souls. How happy are some of our Modern Controversists if they can but make an Opinion, which they cannot solidly refute, look like some old Heresie, or shew how Atheists may make an advantage of it? This too often proves teaching of Atheism. We should carefully avoid these Excesses and making our Differences wider than they are. Add to this *Ingenuity* an *Holy Life*, and we secure our common Religion. Nor can Atheism find an Argument to delude with, after we have stript it of those which our *Conests* and *Vices* furnish it with.

I have been so large upon this first Head of *Religion*, that I have left my self but little room to speak of *Civil Justice*. I shall therefore wave the *common Arguments*, and only in my way to a Conclusion lay before you the *Obligation of National Interest*.

1. Justice secures that Order by which Nations are establish'd. The forming a Society consists in the resigning of private Will, and submitting to one common Rule or Law. Its end is a general good, which yet will be frustrated, except there be some to put life into the Law by a vigorous execution. *Cicero de Legib. l.* 3. calls the *Magistrate*

a ſpeaking Law, and the Law a mute Magiſtrate. But what if the Magiſtrate will not ſpeak, but is as mute as the Law? Then the one may paſs for a ſhadow of Power, the other for waſt Paper. The ſame Author calls *Reaſon the Univerſal and Eternal Law, the Law of the Gods*; were it *in effect* the Law of *Men* too, a Nation might be Happy with a leſſer body of Statutes, and its Diſorders provided againſt by the quicker Methods of Conſcience, *Quo judice nemo nocens abſolvitur*, Juv Sat. 13. But this fits rather with the Idea's of ſome Romantick Common-wealth than the true ſtate of the World. We are in *fœce ſæculi*, where if Men do not ſuffer Juſtice ſometimes, they will do none. This would tame thoſe Men of Prey, the wicked in Power, when there ſhould be found thoſe who *would break their jaws, and pluck the ſpoil out of their teeth*, Job 29. 17. Thoſe that know no ſuch thing as Property, will rather allow it than be Martyrs for their Opinion. The poor Man ſoweth in hope, becauſe he knows that thô his great Neighbour would enter upon his Labours, there is a greater than he, the Law. But when Innocency hath no defence but it ſelf, the poor comfort of *Murus abeneus*; when Cheating and Theft never ſin but in defect, *viz.* in not having made up a Sum worthy the conſideration of

a Man of Place and Worſhip; when it comes to that, that *Quæ Turpia Cerdoni, Voleſos Brutoſque decebunt*, Juv. Sat. 8. and the Merit of Men's Anceſtors ſhall ſave all their Race from Juſtice; no wonder if Treaſons, Rapines, and an increaſe of all Villany diſſolve the Society, and all runs back into Wilderneſs.

2. It turns away God's Wrath from a Nation. God is honoured by Order, and where that is duly obſerved it looks like his Kingdom. He is delighted in a Nation where Laws are like Copies of his Will, and Magiſtrates are as ambitious to reſemble him in Righteouſneſs as Power. The loins of the Poor ſhall bleſs us; we ſhall make Friends of the Protected Orphans; and thoſe that by our Juſtice have eſcaped Sycophantiſm, Extortion, and other ways of Devouring, ſhall return it us in rich and fruitful Prayers. God is ſo pleaſed with Juſtice, that in the very inſtant of Vengeance it might make him drop his Thunder, and turn to the importunities of his ſofter Attributes. When *Iſrael* went a Whoring after the Gods and Daughters of *Midian*, *Phinehas* going a little out of the way ſo execute Judgment, ſtaid the Revenging Plague, *Pſal.* 106. 30. By the Promiſe made in the Text to the Houſe of *Joſeph*, the

Victorious *Assyrians* had never entred their *Gates*, had they but *establisht Judgment* there. It seems then it is a Fortification, as well as a *Robe and Diadem*, Job 29.

You see now, *Honourable and Worshipful, and others entrusted with the Publick Justice*, you see how much the Common Safety lies in your hands. Think your Native Country flies to your Compassions, your Mother in Tears, it's well not in Blood. Merit then a Crown, the Honour not only *Servati Civis* but *Civitatis*. Dare to be Just; not frighted at a mighty Malefactor; such make a better Sacrifice and a better Example. Like the hand of the Heroick *Phinehas*, know no Quality, otherwise the *Zimries* will laugh at your Title of Gods, and play with the *Sword you bear in vain*. Those that destroy us are zealous, they fear not the Day nor Law; and shall those in whose hands our Peace is entrusted, fear to be singularly good, and devolve upon each other the Honour of Beginning? Rejoyce then, O ye Libertines, ye asserters of Nature!

But in commending Zeal we do not encourage all the Heats and Fits that Humane Minds are capable of. A clear Zeal for Justice can hardly be carried too high, but we must have a care we do not mistake our Passions for it. Even Zeal for

your

your own way of worshipping God may sometimes be out of place, when it runs into transports against those that are protected by the same Laws with our selves. What should I say more of other Corruptions so much below your Character? Perhaps I have said too much already to Persons of your approved Conduct.

I will only speak a word with those that shall come here upon their Oaths, and I have done. You touch the Gospels out of which you shall one day be judged; you call a Just and Omnipotent *God for a Record upon your Souls:* what is the sense of all this if you falsifie, but that you put your hands to your own Damnation? As I take it, you that are upon the Juries represent your Country; it will have but little reason to thank you for the Service, if you involve it in Perjury and the Curse of God. Yet there are shameful stories in the World about prepared Witnesses and made Juries. Sure Men kiss the Book they never read. Do your endeavour to recover the Credit of our Constitution and of Christianity, deliver us and your own Souls. And may God direct all that are concerned in this Assembly so to discharge themselves, as expecting assuredly one day to render an Account in a more Awful Assembly, when God shall Judge the World; that so

the

the Publick Intereſts may receive no check from what ſhall be tranſacted here. And let us all unite in ſuch an *hatred to Evil, and love to Good*, and ſo do our parts in our ſeveral Stations *to the eſtabliſhing of Juſtice*, that God may be glorified by us, and delighted in us, and as he has begun, may continue *to be gracious to the Remnant of* Joſeph.

FINIS.

Books Printed for Samuel Smith, *at the* Prince's Arms *in St.* Paul's *Church-yard.* 1691.

A Sermon Preached at the Aſſizes held at *Horſham* in the County of *Suſſex*, *Auguſt* 23d. 1691. Before the Honourable Sir *William Dolben*, Knight, one of the Juſtices of the Court of *King's-Bench*. By *Richard Lucas*, D.D. Vicar of *St. Stephen's Coleman-ſtreet, London*. In 4°. Price 6 *d.*

Enquiry after Happineſs, Vol. the Firſt, in 8°. 1685. Price 3 *s.* 6 *d.*

The true Notion of Humane Life: Or, A Second Part of the Enquiry after Happineſs, in 8°. 1690. Price 2 *s.* 6 *d.*

The *Duty of Servants*: Containing, Firſt, The Parents Duty, how to Educate their Children, that they may be fit to be employed and truſted. Second, What Preparation is needful for ſuch as are entring into Service, with ſome Rules to be obſerved by them, how to make a wiſe and happy Choice of a Service. 3. Their Duty in Service towards *God*, their *Maſter*, and *Themſelves*; together with ſuitable Prayers to each Duty, and ſome Directions peculiarly to Servants for the Worthy Receiving the Holy Sacrament. Publiſhed for the Benefit of Families, in 8°. Price 1 *s.* 6 *d.*

All written by the ſame Author.

The Wiſdom of God manifeſted in the Works of the Creation, By *Jo. Ray*, M. A. Fellow of the Royal Society, in 8°. 1691. Price 2 *s.* 6 *d.*

A New Hiſtory of the *Roman* Conclave: Containing the Rites and Ceremonies uſed and obſerved at the Death, Election, and Coronation of the *Pope*: As alſo an Exact Deſcription of the ſtate of *Rome*, during the Vacancy of that Chair. Together with a Brief Account of the Life of this preſent Pope *Innocent* XII. 4°. Price 6 *d.* 1691.